Procurement of Radio Vehicles from BEL by IAF

810. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the IAF procured Radio Vehicles from BEL for use in the desert region but could not utilise them as they were not equipped with sand tyres; and

(b) if so, who has been held responsible for this?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU): (a) and (b) All the Radio Vehicles procured from MS. BEL are in use effectively, in non desert/desert areas. However, their use in desert areas is limited to operation within the periphery of the Camp. Further, sand tyres are being developed by the manufacturer to use these vehicles in deep desert area.

IAF Aircrafts lost in Accidents

811. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: SHRI NILOTPAL BASU:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that IAF has lost 94 aircrafts in accidents during the last four years;

(b) if so, what are the 'makes' of these aircrafts and what is the total cost of these aircrafts;

(c) whether an inquiry has been conducted into such incidents and if so, the findings thereof;

(d) whether these accidents are attributable to human failure or inadequate training or faulty maintenance procedures/schedules;

(e) how many crew members have lost their lives in these accidents and what was the total amount spent on their training; and

(f) what steps have been proposed to reduce the incidents of such peacetime accidents?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU): (a) and (b) IAF have lost 100 aircraft since April 1993 involving MIG variants, helicopters etc. The total loss suffered by IAF on these accidents is Rs. 776.06 crores excluding the cost of 3 aircrafts for which Court of Inquiry is in progress.

(c) and (d) The Courts of Inquiries conducted have revealed that these accidents occured mainly due to Technical Defects, Human Error and Bird Strike.

(e) A total of 47 crew members have lost their lives in these accidents. An amount of approx. Rs. 5.68 crores, Rs. 2.48 crores and Rs. 1.65 crores is spent on training of a pilot from Fighter Stream, Transport Stream & Helicopter Stream respectively.

(f) In order to contain air accidents due to Human Error & Technical Defects, the IAF have reviewed their air support and attack patterns taking into considera tion the tactical conditions and aircraft performance. The manufacturers are be ing closely associated to avoid recurrence of Technical Defects. As regards acci dents due to Bird Strike, steps have been taken by the Ministries of Agriculture & Urban Affairs and Employment and the State Governments, concerned for mod ernisation of slaughter houses/carcass utilisation centres and for sanitisation around the Bird prone airfields to reduce bird activities.

Inadequate canteen facilities in Kollam, Kerala

812. SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the defecne Ministry received any complaints from the Kerala State Ex-servicemen's league that the defence canteen functioning at Kollam,

Kerala is not adequate to meet the requirements of 30,000 ex-servicemen belonging to Kollam, Pathanamthitta and part of Alleppey district; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Kerala State-Ex-Services League has requested that a Unit Run Canteen be set up in Pathanamthitta District under the functional authority of the Station Headquaters Trivandrum. Army authorities have reported that a mobile canteen service to Pathanamthitta has already started functioning since June 1997 under the aegis of Station Headquarters, Trivandrum.

Rohtang Tunnel Project

813. SHRI VIRENDRA KATARIA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the progress report of Rohtang Tunnel project undertaken by Border Road Development Board; and

(b) what are the reasons that this project is not being taken on war footing which is so important and strategic from Defence point of view and for the tourism in Himachal Pradesh and for the convenience of the people of Himachal Pradesh specially Lahul spiti?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU): (a) and (b) The feasibility study of constructing a tunnel at Rohtang was to be carried out in three phases. The report of phase-I was submitted by Ms RITES in 1994.

The report of phase-II was submitted by Ms RITES on 30.12.1996. Both the reports are under examination from technical angle. The environmental impact study is also underway.

Utilisation of the old bridge over Teesta River

814. SHRI DAWA LAMA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal with Government to utilise the old bridge over river Teesta connecting Teesta Bazar & Kalimpong for the purpose of running small vehicles; and

(b) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU): (a) and (b) No, Sir. The 400 feet old Bailey Suspension Bridge (BSB) has been replaced by a 180 metre long double-lane Reinforced Cement Concrete (RCC) permanent bridge and was opened to traffic during May, 1996. The old bridge was dismantled and has been reused as per the requirement of the Army.

Purchase of Commercial Jet aircrafts

815. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any proposal to buy commercial Jet aircrafts for country's defence purpose;

(b) if so, the number of Jet aircrafts proposed to be purchased by Government;

(c) the cost of those aircrafts; and

(d) the country from which those aircrafts are proposed to be purchased?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Does not arise.